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ABSTRACT

In order to determine whether Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) had the capacity to produce a TV series of sufficient quality, two pilot tapes were produced by AEL and then submitted for rating to nine broadcasting specialists from several commercial TV stations. Based on the responses of these nine individuals to a questionnaire dealing with technical quality and marketability, it appears that AEL has been able to demonstrate its capacity to produce TV tapes of sufficient quality. The tapes were judged to be average to above average in quality in 15 of the 16 technical categories on which they were rated. Only one category, "continuity of programing," was felt to be average or below in technical quality. Over three-fourths of the interviewed felt that the tapes were above average with respect to technical quality, and the majority were willing to make some efforts to obtain the tapes. (WDR)

Commercial Television Personnel's Review of the Technical Quality and Marketability of AEL's "Around the Bend" Pilot Tapes

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Technical Report No. 29

Research and Evaluation Division
Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Inc.
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Commercial Television Personnel's Review of the Technical Quality and Marketability of AEL's "Around the Bend" Pilot Tapes

The capability of the Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) to produce a technically sufficient television series was questioned by the National Institute of Education (NIE) during an evaluation conducted by NIE in the Fall of 1972. An NIE specialist panel recommended "that AEL initiate development of the proposed marketable TV series".[1] A master panel then recommended the documentation of AEL's capability to develop the TV component. Dr. Thomas K. Glennan, Director of the NIE, directed AEL to explore and document the capability of development of a TV program, and stated that reviewers had "noted certain problems with respect to the technical quality of your marketable pre-school education program".[2] In accordance with the NIE communications, the purpose of this report is to document the commercial TV specialists' assessment of the capability of AEL to direct the production of a television program of adequate technical quality.

Selection of TV Production Facility

To insure that a television program of high technical quality was produced, evaluation of television production facilities in the Appalachian Region was conducted. The television studios of 21st Century Productions (WLAC-TV), Nashville, Tennessee, was finally selected as the facility to produce the two pilot tapes for AEL. The selection of a studio was made after consultations, visits, and surveying of facilities in the Appalachian Region and was based on bid price, total equipment criteria, performance record, availability, proximity

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[1] Specialist Panel Verification Review, October 9-10, 1972, p. 5, by November 22, 1972, memorandum from Dr. Marc S. Tucker, Task Force on Lab/Center Transition.

[2] By letter dated November 10, 1972.

to the Appalachian Region, accessibility of the city, availability of supporting services, and the calibre of local talent. The technical specifications and response to the survey of WLAC-TV are contained in Appendix A.

Technical Quality Assessment Procedures

Broadcast specialists (including program directors, managers, and chief engineers) at several commercial television stations in the Appalachian Region were then contacted and were asked if they would be willing to view two pilot tapes produced by AEL and rate the tapes in terms of their technical quality. They were also to respond to questions about the marketability of a series of such tapes in their area. Nine individuals from various commercial stations were able to view the tapes in early May 1973 and respond to a questionnaire prepared by AEL (See Appendix B). There were three people from WIIC-TV (NBC) and one from KDKA-TV (CBS) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; one from WOAY-TV (ABC) in Oak Hill, West Virginia; two from WSAZ-TV (NBC) in Huntington, West Virginia; one from WSVA-TV (ABC) in Harrisonburg, Virginia; and one from WJHL-TV (CBS) in Johnson City, Tennessee (For specific names, see Appendix C).

Results

The nine individuals were asked to respond to 16 categories which dealt with the technical quality of the pilot tapes. These 16 categories were developed initially by AEL staff members and were revised slightly after consultation with television experts at 21st Century Productions. The nine individuals were asked to rate each of the 16 categories in terms of the pilot tapes being a.) excellent quality, b.) above average quality, c.) average quality, d.) below average quality, and e.) unacceptable. Ratings were to be made using established broadcasting standards. Their responses were then

coded in a 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 fashion respectively. Table 1 presents the response frequencies and means for each category. Responses to a 17th category -- OVERALL QUALITY -- is also presented.

Table 1 indicates that four categories attained mean scores between excellent (5) and above average quality (4). These four categories were COLOR (4.44), LIGHTING (4.33), SOUND (4.22), and MUSIC (4.11). Only one category attained a mean score between average (3) and below average quality (2). This category was CONTINUITY OF PROGRAMMING (2.56). One individual also gave an unacceptable (1) rating to the PUPPETS category, verbally indicating that, in general, he didn't like them, and specifically, they were not appealing to children, didn't look like humans, and he didn't like their voices. Eleven of the categories attained mean scores between above average quality (4) and average quality (3); three categories below a mean of 3.50 and eight categories at or above a mean of 3.50. After rating the pilot tapes for technical quality on each of the 16 categories, the nine broadcasting specialists then rated the overall quality of the tapes. Seven of the individuals rated the tapes as above average quality while the other two individuals rated the tapes as average quality. Thus, the mean score for OVERALL QUALITY was 3.78. Figure 1 presents a pictorial representation of these data.

There were also three questions dealing with the marketability of the Around the Bend pilot tapes. Table 2 presents response frequencies and means for each question. (The responses were coded in a 2, 1, 0 fashion for each question). Table 2 is on page 6.

The first question was: How would these tapes be received in your market area? There were three alternative choices of selection for answering the question: 1.) enthusiastically, 2.) so-so, and 3.) poorly. While two of the individuals responded "enthusiastically", seven responded "so-so".

Table 1

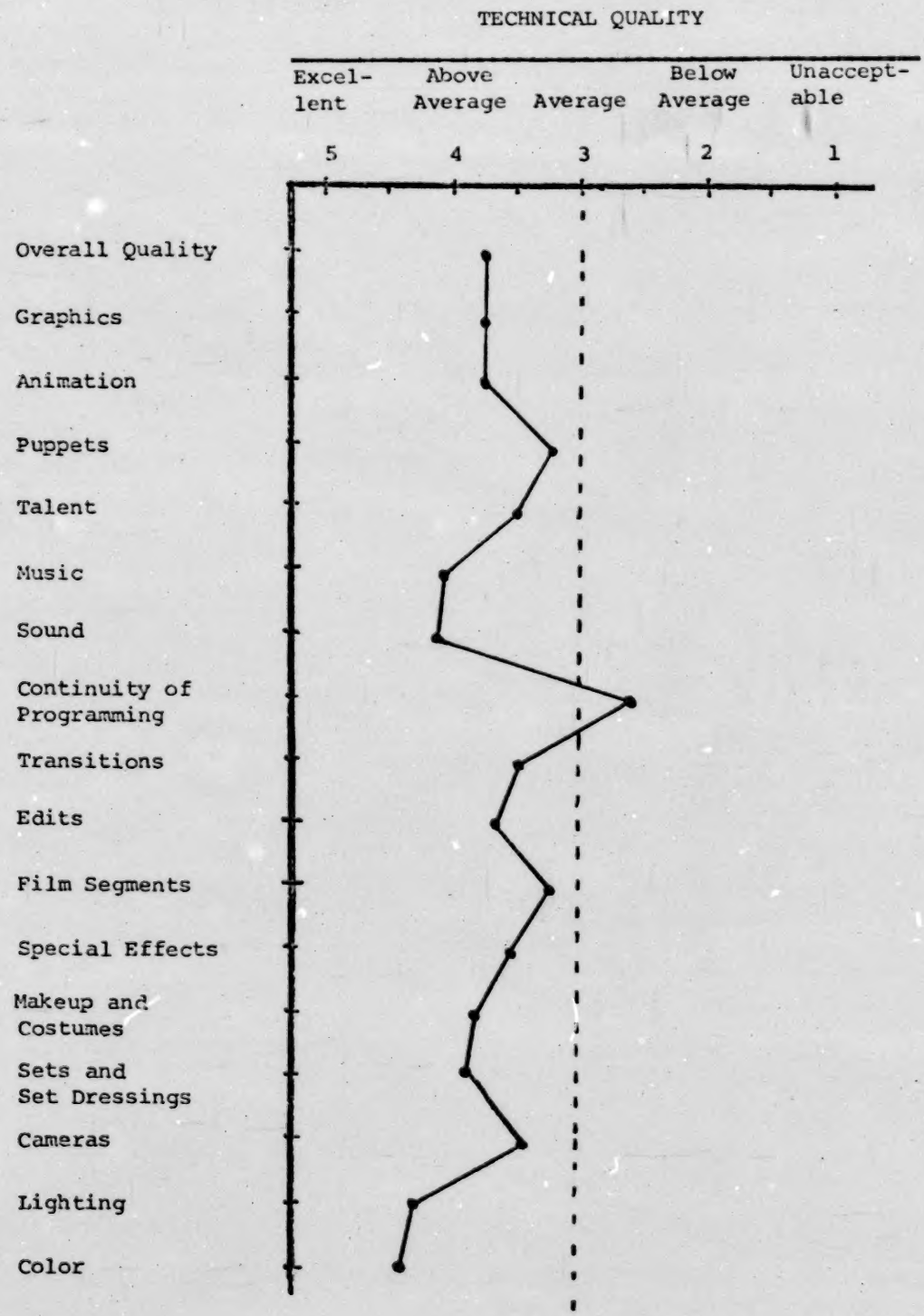
Response Frequencies and Means
for Technical Quality for Each Category
(n = 9)

	Frequencies					
	Excellent (5)	Above Average Quality (4)	Average (3)	Below Average Quality (2)	Unacceptable (1)	Mean Score
COLOR (balance, intensity, use of color)	4	5	-	-	-	4.44
LIGHTING (adequacy, special uses)	4	4	1	-	-	4.33
CAMERAS (composition of shots, movements, sequence of shots, close-ups, camera placements)	-	5	3	1	-	3.44
SETS AND SET DRESSINGS (functional use, style, kinds)	1	6	2	-	-	3.89
MAKEUP AND COSTUMES (appropriateness, style)	1	5	3	-	-	3.78
SPECIAL EFFECTS (inserts, supers)	1	4	3	1	-	3.56
FILM SEGMENTS	-	2	7	-	-	3.22
EDITS (quality of edit points)	1	5	2	1	-	3.67
TRANSITIONS (dissolves, cuts)	-	4	4	-	-	3.50*
CONTINUITY OF PROGRAMMING (obvious flow)	-	-	5	4	-	2.56
SOUND (adequate miking, balance, extraneous noise, mixing, synchronization)	3	5	1	-	-	4.22
MUSIC (appropriate, underscoring, theme, instrumentation, selection)	3	4	2	-	-	4.11
TALENT (moves, delivery, casting, voice)	1	3	5	-	-	3.56
PUPPETS (movements, timing, voices, synchronization, setting, appropriateness)	1	2	5	-	1	3.22
ANIMATION (art work, sound, timing)	2	4	2	1	-	3.78
GRAPHICS (titling)	1	6	1	1	-	3.78
OVERALL QUALITY	-	7	2	-	-	3.78

*One individual did not respond to this category.

Figure 1

Profile of Mean Responses to Categories of Technical Quality of the HOPE Pilot Tapes by Nine Commercial Television Specialists



The second question was: If these tapes were available to your station at no cost or effort to you, would you use them? There were three choices available for answering this question: 1.) definitely, 2.) maybe, and 3.) no. While two of the individuals responded "definitely", seven responded "maybe". The third question was: Would you be willing to make some effort to obtain these tapes? The choices for answering were definitely, maybe, and no. For this question five individuals responded "definitely" and four responded "maybe".

Table 2

Response Frequencies and Means
for Marketability for Each Question
(n = 9)

Question	Response Choice (weight) and Frequency of Solution			Mean
1. How would these tapes be received in your market area?	Enthusiastically (2)	So-So (1)	Poorly (0)	
	2	7	0	1.22
2. If these tapes were available to your station at no cost or effort to you, would you use them?	Definitely (2)	Maybe (1)	No (0)	
	2	7	0	1.22
3. Would you be willing to make some effort to obtain these tapes?	Definitely (2)	Maybe (1)	No (0)	
	5	4	0	1.56

After the three questions were presented there was also space available for the individuals to comment. Five of the individuals wrote comments and

these comments are listed below:

1. Provided pacing and content were upgraded (in reference to his response of "definitely" for question 3).
2. The impact is not sufficient to elicit enthusiasm or definite commitment. They are superior to previous programs.
3. It is becoming more important for a local station to be involved in the production of children's programming on their OWN.
4. In a commercial station, program material is available in great quantity; therefore, these questions are unanswerable without specifying other factors.
5. The time period I would select for the show is not available. However, if it was, I would give the series my serious consideration (in reference to his response of "maybe" for question 3).

Summary

In order to determine if AEL has the capability of producing a TV series of sufficient technical quality, two pilot tapes were produced by AEL and then submitted for rating to nine broadcasting specialists from several commercial TV stations (two from CBS affiliates, two from ABC affiliates, and five from NBC affiliates). Based upon the responses of these nine individuals to a questionnaire dealing with technical quality and marketability, it appears that AEL has been able to demonstrate its capability of producing TV tapes which exhibit technical quality. They judged the tapes to be average to above average in quality on 15 of the 16 technical categories to which they responded. Only one category, CONTINUITY OF PROGRAMMING, was felt to be average or below in technical quality. However, since AEL was trying to demonstrate its ability to do various types of segments in the television tapes, continuity of programming within the tape was not a high priority concern to AEL.

Over three-fourths of these individuals felt that the tapes were above average with respect to technical quality. The majority of these broadcasting specialists were also willing to make a concerted effort to obtain the tapes.

Appendix A

EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES

DIOS

— 3600 square feet each

DIO EQUIPMENT

00 ft. cyclorama in each studio
0 ft. diameter turntable in studio "A"
louston-Fearless studio pedestals
isual Electronic Typewriter (videograph)
tar filter attachments (visual effects)
1 - CHAPMAN CRANE

MERAS

3 General Electric PE250 A2A, B, C fully retrofitted
3 General Electric PE350
(all six fully compatible with each other)

DIO

5 Ampex audio recorders ¼" and ½" capabilities with 1, 2, or four tracks available.
2 RCA custom audio consoles complete with equalizers, echo chambers, and selectable limiter amps
1 Nagra ¼" audio recorder with sync accessories

CROPHONES

Wide assortment of Electro-Voice and RCA microphones anging from EV 635A's to the new EV RE-20.
Cole-Richardson boom mike preambulator is also ilable.

M CHAINS

3 RCA TK-27 color chains (all equipped with 2 16mm projectors and one 35mm slide projector).

M CAMERAS

~~1 Mitchell BNCR Mark II 35mm camera~~
1 Eclair 16mm
1 Arriflex 16mm
(all above cameras equipped with a wide assortment of lenses and accessories. All equipped for pilot-tone double system sync sound)

1 - CPC-16 CINEMA PRODUCTS CAMERA

FILM PROCESSING

16mm color film (Etkachrome ME-4 process)
35mm color slide (Etkachrome ME-4 process)
B & W enlarger and printing also available

STUDIO SWITCHERS

2 Central Dynamics Ltd. Solid State vertical interval, triple re-entry video switchers. Custom designed with three additive/non-additive mixing amplifiers, one special effects unit with 32 patterns available, wipe keying, joy stick positioning, colorizing, and built-in audio modulation. Chroma Key with switching panel selection of hue and keying level.

Color background generator also available on each switcher.

LIGHTING

Each studio complete with assortment of 5000, 2000, 1500, 1000, 650 and 150 watt spots, scoops, and cyc strips.
Hanging grid work and floor stands available.

1 Kliegl custom built SCR dimmer bank containing 15-12KW and 9-6KW dimmers and 11-6KW no-dim relays. Each studio has its own pre-set panel with five scene pre-set capability.

VIDEO TAPE EQUIPMENT

+ 1 - AMPEX 1200C

3 Ampex VR2000 completely equipped with auto-chroma's, velocity compensators, and electronic editors. One Editec unit available.

3 RCA TR-3HB ~~completely equipped with Cavec, air~~ conversion, auto guide servo's, fully high banded and compatible with VR2000's.

1 - POST PRODUCTION SWITCHER SEPARATE FROM STUDIO SWITCHERS ASSOCIATED WITH VIDEO TAPE EQUIPMENT

PRODUCTION REQUIREMENTS CHECKLIST

Facility: WLAC-TV
Nashville, Tennessee

* * * *

Spare video-tape recorder (for add-ons or over-dubbing)

available ✓

unavailable____

Remarks:

One color film chain

available ✓

unavailable____

Remarks:

Electronic editing

available ✓

unavailable____

Remarks:

Controllable studio lighting

available ✓

unavailable____

Remarks:

Special effects devices

available ✓

unavailable____

Remarks:

(more)

Facilities Checklist

Adequate studio and storage space for at least three permanent sets

available ✓

unavailable____

Remarks:

Darkroom

available ✓

unavailable____

Remarks:

Color film processing on premises

available ✓

unavailable____

Remarks:

Readily-accessible commercial lab for color processing

available ✓

unavailable____

Remarks: LOCATED IN Memphis

Regular studio access (minimum of two hours for each half-hour production)

available ✓

unavailable____

Remarks:

(more)

Regular studio access at odd times for set construction, set change, rehearsals without cameras and other unscheduled activities.

available ✓

unavailable____

Remarks:

On-premises office and work space for production crew of approximately 20 persons

available ✓

unavailable____

Remarks: AT CERTAIN TIMES OF YEAR

Nearby office and work space for production crew

available____

unavailable____

Remarks:

On-premises storage space for supplies and equipment

available ✓

unavailable____

Remarks:

Nearby storage facilities

available____

unavailable____

Remarks:

On-premises conference room or similar facility

available ✓

unavailable____

Remarks:

Nearby hotels, motels, apartments, stores, dining facilities and airport

available ✓

unavailable____

Remarks:

Personnel Checklist

Two or more cameramen

available ✓

unavailable____

Remarks:

One or more aduio engineers

available ✓

unavailable____

Remarks:

One or more video engineers

available ✓

unavailable____

Remarks:

(more)

Projectionist

available ✓

unavailable____

Remarks:

Production crew and technician utilization on a regular schedule (minimum of approximately two hours a day)

available ✓

unavailable____

Remarks:

Local talent (strictly professional calibre): actors, puppeteers, artists, scriptwriters, set designers, etc.

available ✓

unavailable____

Remarks:

Please attach any additional data about your production facilities you feel would be of interest to us.

* * * *

Appendix B

Survey of Commercial Television

Name _____

Position _____

Station _____

Background and Training

Technical Quality of the Around The Bend Pilot Tapes

We are quite anxious to have your candid reactions to our tapes. Please rate the tapes on each of the following sixteen criteria by circling the appropriate numbers as indicated in the following scale.

5. Excellent
4. Above average quality
3. Average
2. Below average quality
1. Unacceptable

COLOR (balance, intensity, use of color)	5	4	3	2	1
LIGHTING (adequacy, special uses)	5	4	3	2	1
CAMERAS (composition of shots, movements, sequence of shots, close-ups, camera placements)	5	4	3	2	1
SETS AND SET DRESSINGS (functional use, style, kinds)	5	4	3	2	1
MAKEUP AND COSTUMES (appropriateness, style)	5	4	3	2	1
SPECIAL EFFECTS (inserts, supers)	5	4	3	2	1
FILM SEGMENTS	5	4	3	2	1
EDITS (quality of edit points)	5	4	3	2	1
TRANSITIONS (dissolves, cuts)	5	4	3	2	1
CONTINUITY OF PROGRAMMING (obvious flow)	5	4	3	2	1
SOUND (adequate miking, balance, extraneous noise, mixing, synchronization)	5	4	3	2	1
MUSIC (appropriate, underscoring, theme, instrumentation, selection)	5	4	3	2	1
TALENT (moves, delivery, casting, voice)	5	4	3	2	1
PUPPETS (movements, timing, voices, synchronization, setting, appropriateness)	5	4	3	2	1
ANIMATION (art work, sound, timing)	5	4	3	2	1
GRAPHICS (titling)	5	4	3	2	1
OVERALL QUALITY	5	4	3	2	1

Survey of Commercial Television
Stations for Technical Quality
and Marketability of Around The Bend Pilot Tapes *

1. How would these tapes be received in your market area?

1	2	3
Enthusiastically	so-so	poorly

2. If these tapes were available to your station at no cost or effort to you, would you use them?

1	2	3
Definitely	maybe	no

3. Would you be willing to make some effort to obtain these tapes?

1	2	3
Definitely	maybe	no

4. Comments:

---

* Your responses in no way imply a committment to purchase or use the Around The Bend tapes in the programming at your station.

Appendix C

Commercial Television Specialists Who Participated in Assessment of Technical Quality

Name	Position	Station	Affiliation	Location
Milton Augenstene	Chief Engineer	WIIC-TV	NBC	Pittsburgh, PA
Bill Bowers	Program Director	WSVA-TV	ABC	Harrisonburg, VA
Robert R. Brown	Manager and Owner	WOAY-TV	ABC	Oak Hill, WV
David Chase	Program Director	WIIC-TV	NBC	Pittsburgh, PA
John E. Goldhammer	Program Manager	KDKA-TV	CBS	Pittsburgh, PA
Al Gregory	Program Director	WJHL-TV	CBS	Johnson City, TN
Bob Harris	Charleston Operations Manager	WSAZ-TV	NBC	Huntington, WV
Fritz Leichner	Production Director Operations Manager	WSAZ-TV	NBC	Huntington, WV
Robert Wehrman	Chief Engineer	WIIC-TV	NBC	Pittsburgh, PA